

Ancient Japan

The land of many islands



The Topography

Japan is an **ARCHIPELAGO**

This is a chain of many islands

These islands were formed by volcanoes

It is 500 miles off the coast of China

It is 100 miles off the coast of Korea

Main Islands

There are 4 main island

- Honshu – the largest
- Kyushu – the most southern
- Shikoku – the smallest
- Hokkaido- the northernmost island



Heian Empire

Emperor Yozie ruled Japan during the Heian period (from 794 A.D. to 1185 A.D.)

Before this Japan borrowed
much of their culture from China

Relations with China ended in 879 A.D. and
Japan isolated themselves for 500 years

Kyoto

Kyoto was the new capital and modeled after the Chinese city Chang'an

The big difference was Kyoto had a large wall around the city

Many of the buildings in Kyoto were built of wood and fires were very common

Canals also ran through the city

Differences in groups of people

For the nobles life was peaceful and culture thrived

Nobles were in several categories and wore special robes to tell the class that they were in

For the lower end of the class system work was hard and life difficult

Feudalism in Japan

During the 1000's the emperor began to lose power and nobles began to gain power.

Nobles owned large pieces of land called estates.
The work done on this land was done by peasants

Feudalism – an economic, political and social system, in which poor people are legally bound to work for wealthy landowners

Samurai

Rich landowners often disobeyed the emperor

They had private armies and the warriors were called **Samurai**

Samurai followed strict rules of behavior called **Bushido**



Bushido

Honor meant more than wealth or life itself

Never show weakness

Never surrender

Have no fear of death

Commit suicide rather than betray the
bushido

Daimyo

Over time samurai formed clans with a leader called a **Daimyo**

Daimyo expected samurai to give their lives for their leader

In 1192 Emperor gave the title of **Shogun** to the most powerful daimyo

Yoritomo Rule

Minamoto Yoritomo became the first Shogun

He set up the Kamakura shogunate, a series of military dynasties

Invaders

A group from Mongolia threatened Japan

Their leader was **Kublai Khan**

The Japanese defeated him twice and kept Japan isolated

Finally in the 1500's Europeans came to Japan

Tokugawa shogunate ruled Japan until 1867.